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ABSTRACT

This booklet examines the efforts of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Malawi to increase the enrollment of girls in their schools. Each country has severe problems of access to education for girls; the gender gap in the gross enrollment rate at the primary school level is at least 10 percentage points in each country. What is noteworthy about these three countries is the serious and innovative attempts they are making to equalize the participation of girls and boys in school. The research in this booklet is based on short field visits to each country and interviews with governmental officials, teachers, parents, and students. Random observations were conducted in urban and rural area schools. The ultimate goal is to get more girls into school as a critical step in reducing poverty in the country. Chapters include: (1) "Leveling the Playing Field"; (2) "Building on Traditional Values in Balochistan"; (3) Making Schooling Free and Gender-Sensitive in Malawi"; and (4) "Creating Partnerships for Education in Bangladesh." (Contains 20 references.) (EH)

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Leveling the playing field

*Giving girls an equal
chance for basic education—
three countries' efforts*

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EDI LEARNING RESOURCES SERIES

Leveling the playing field

*Giving girls an equal
chance for basic education—
three countries' efforts*

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Foreword

Educating girls lifts their earning potential and their nations' economic growth. It also reduces child mortality, fertility rates, and the spread of AIDS. It increases the duration of girls' own lives and the human potential of the children they will bear. And it has important environmental benefits. Ultimately, getting more girls into school is critical for reducing poverty.

The World Bank's education lending increasingly supports governments' efforts to target girls. Despite these efforts, girls' education still lags behind that of boys in many developing countries. The causes are a complex mix of cultural, economic, and school-level factors.

As part of the World Bank's efforts to enhance women's participation in economic development, the Economic Development Institute (EDI) is working to demonstrate to policymakers the advantages of educating girls, to help planners and educators design effective approaches, and to educate the broader public about the social and economic benefits of educating girls. As part of its work, over the last several years, EDI has held seminars for government leaders, developed

handbooks, videos, and training manuals for officials, and created targeted handouts for journalists. Building on this ongoing work, as a contribution to the Fourth UN Conference on Women, EDI prepared this profile of three countries that are taking innovative and courageous steps to level the playing field in education for the benefit of girls.

In describing the activities of the three governments and their partnerships with bilateral and multilateral organizations and with NGOs, the booklet draws lessons that will be of value to policymakers in other countries. It strives to let the people who are working on girls' education in these countries, the parents of the girls who are benefiting, and the girls themselves tell their own stories about how these changes are affecting their lives. We hope that the lessons from these countries will guide government officials and NGOs in other countries as they increase their efforts to let education unlock the full human potential of girls.

Vinod Thomas
Director

Economic Development Institute

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Leveling the Playing Field

Giving Girls an Equal Chance for Basic Education—Three Countries' Efforts

Governments and collaborating institutions must listen more carefully to the voices of individual women...and to women's groups. By working with others to identify and implement policies that promote gender equality, governments can make a real difference to the future well-being and prosperity of their people. (Toward Gender Equality: The Role of Public Policy, World Bank, July 1995)

How do governments grapple with the deep-seated cultural, institutional, and political factors that underlie the gender disparity in access to school? How do parents and communities feel about these attempts? What is the impact of reform efforts on the people involved in managing and running the school system? What happens to the girls? This booklet examines the efforts of three developing countries to increase the number of girls in school.

Why these countries?

Bangladesh, Malawi, and Pakistan all have severe problems of access to education: in 1990 gross enrollment ratios at the primary level were 77 percent in Bangladesh, 66 percent in Malawi, and 42 percent in Pakistan, and net enrollment ratios were much lower. All three countries rank in the bottom third of developing countries on UNESCO's Basic Education Index (UNESCO 1993b). The gender gap in the gross enrollment rate at primary school is at least 10 percentage points in each country.

Many other developing countries share these problems. What is noteworthy about these three countries are the serious and innovative attempts they are making to equalize the participation of girls and boys in school. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) has been actively involved in this effort for more than ten years. Efforts in Pakistan's disadvantaged Balochistan Province began more than five years ago. In Malawi, although efforts to equalize access are less than five years old, huge changes in enrollment are being reported as earlier programs to get more girls in school are being expanded under the new, democratically elected government's program to promote education for all.

What are the results?

The descriptions in this booklet are based on short field visits to each of the three countries. During the visits, a wide range of ministry of education officials, personnel in nongovernmental organizations, teachers, parents, and students were interviewed. Classroom interactions and school facilities in urban and rural areas were observed. Schools, teachers, and students were chosen at random for observation and semistructured interviews.

While full measurement of the impact of these countries' reform efforts is difficult, each has clearly succeeded in increasing the number of girls in school. Bangladesh's BRAC has been extremely successful: from a total of twenty-two schools serving 676 stu-

dents in 1985, BRAC is now administering almost 30,000 schools serving 900,000 children. More than two-thirds of these children are girls. Over a five-year period in Balochistan the number of girls in school doubled, and 279 community schools were established. In Malawi, the enrollment of girls increased by 44 percent between 1989 and 1992 (compared with an increase of 29 percent for boys). In 1993, for the first time in Malawi's history, the number of girls enrolling in primary school exceeded the number of boys.

There has also been progress in retaining girls in school. Enrollment is much more sensitive to supply measures than are retention and completion, which require persistent demand strategies, particularly efforts to develop supportive attitudes toward girls' education within families and communities. More than 90 percent of BRAC's students move on to grade four of government schools, and a further 78 percent of these move on to grade five—a significantly higher percentage than among children who have studied only in government schools. In Balochistan, the primary school completion rate for girls increased by 11 percent between 1989 and 1994.

Achievement is particularly affected by the time spent on learning. In BRAC schools, the time spent annually in school in the first two years is greater than the time spent in government schools, while a study of seven districts in Balochistan shows that the community schools operated twice as many days during the school year as government schools.

These figures leave undocumented significant qualitative changes—such as students' acquisition of knowledge, aspirations for further schooling, the

development of new gender roles, and changes in classroom practices that foster more confident and self-reliant girl students.

Lessons from the countries

The interaction of cultural, institutional, environmental, and political factors underlying gender disparities in education makes it extremely difficult to draw lessons from one country that can be applied directly to another. No single approach can solve the problems of inequity of access in all the countries that face this problem. Nevertheless, experiences in these three countries reveal factors and processes that are likely to be important in successful attempts to equalize access to schooling.

Government's role is key

Broad policies and initiatives within and outside the education sector have an impact on the attractiveness of education and the attendance of girls (Bellew and King 1993). One key to successful interventions is an active and supportive government. In Malawi, the government's decision to remove primary school fees indicated to the community the level of importance attached to education by officials. In Bangladesh, the government's establishment of compulsory education, joint efforts between the government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to develop new schools, and the willingness of government schools to take in BRAC graduates are all important features in BRAC's success. In Balochistan, the Society for Community Support for Primary Education (the Society) works closely with the government, which actively promotes and supports efforts to increase the number of girls in school.

***But it must work in partnership
with others***

Resource constraints and competing interests make it impossible for governments to work alone. In each of the three countries examined, partnerships with international and donor agencies were crucial to success. In Malawi, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), by supporting the work of Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE), showed the way for the new government to implement policies, while the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) helped to promote the work. In Balochistan, USAID for a time and now the World Bank have supported the programs. In Bangladesh, BRAC is supported by a multiplicity of donor agencies. Support from international agencies can leverage local resources and, equally important, can make possible activities that might be difficult for local agencies to promote initially.

A clear message from Balochistan and Bangladesh is that partnerships between government and NGOs can be a powerful tool for social progress. The government can benefit from greater community outreach, innovative ideas, and more efficient delivery of services. NGOs can benefit from securing regular sources of funding, thus enabling them to reach a larger number of people, and having some of their ideas institutionalized. These partnerships are likely to be more fruitful if they take full advantage of the different resources and perspectives that each partner can bring. The flexibility of NGOs in curriculum, program duration, and personnel is valuable. BRAC, for instance, appeals to rural girls through its alternative curriculum that is not only gender-sensitive but also attractive to children, incorporating songs, dance, and poetry. However, the status, reach, and quality control that government can ensure are needed as well.



Primary school girls are benefiting from the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's work

NGOs often do not introduce totally new ideas but instead capitalize on opportunities for social change. One of their greatest assets is the ability to identify and work with individuals with new visions. Cultural norms are not hermetic. There are groups in every community or society that can more clearly see the benefits of modifying the status quo and the inequities of traditional patterns of behavior. The work of the Society's promoters and BRAC's program organizers and assistants occurs precisely in these interstices of the social fabric.

And the involvement of the community is crucial

Most important, these experiences show the value of community involvement. In Balochistan and Bangladesh, the contributions by parents in monitoring school attendance and student appearance and performance reduce the resources that governments need to apply to these efforts. The provision of facilities and furniture for temporary schools and the subsequent granting of land for permanent schools reduce government capital costs. These measures affect costs and quality—monitoring by the community contributes to less absenteeism, less repetition of grades, and better academic performance. Data for the community schools in Balochistan, the satellite schools in Bangladesh, and the BRAC schools in Bangladesh indicate that attendance increased substantially and retention for the first two or three grades surpassed that of the public system as a result of community mobilization and project monitoring mechanisms. Involving parents and the wider community in the provision of education not only promotes personal gains but also ben-

efits the society as a whole as parents become more active as citizens, relate more to public institutions, and contribute to developing a more participatory—and thus more democratic—everyday life.

When planning: Envision a demand-supply interaction

A number of lessons emerge for planners. First, the expansion and improvement of girls' education is best seen as a demand-supply interaction. On the supply side, more schools and classrooms, female teachers, and gender-sensitive curricula are needed. Work on the demand side calls for both convincing parents of the value of education for their daughters (and therefore of the need to reduce girls' household chores) and providing incentives to offset the opportunity costs of girls' labor. The three countries' experiences indicate that bringing classrooms closer to girls' homes can diminish the costs of girls' schooling. Introducing female teachers, constructing separate lavatories for girls, and making the curriculum more gender-sensitive made the schools more acceptable to parents.

Efforts on the demand side were no less important. They influenced parents to support the education of girls and diminished the private costs of school attendance. The connection between supply and demand is substantial. As Colclough (1994) notes, policies to improve the availability and quality of schools affect demand. Reductions in the distance to school reduce the opportunity costs and perceived dangers of attendance for girls. Qualitative improvements in training and curriculum content make schools more enjoyable and their graduates more productive.

Identify an appropriate package of "girl-friendly" measures

Second, a package of "girl-friendly" measures is likely to be more successful than any one measure. Although the content of the package will vary across regions and countries, some elements are especially important: locating schools close to communities, waiving fees, recognizing girls' special needs (for privacy, single-sex classes; appropriate learning materials, and so on), and having locally based, preferably female, teachers and flexible school calendars and timetables are all important.

And target girls

A third lesson for planners is that programs to improve girls' education require vigilance to ensure that the intended beneficiaries—girls—indeed benefit.

Overall improvements in education are always desirable, but special attention is required to level the field for girls. The experiences of Malawi and Bangladesh suggest that if reforms are implemented without explicit identification of girls as targets, gender disparities may not be reduced and may even widen. In Bangladesh, establishing a target enrollment for girls ensured their greater participation in BRAC schools. By contrast, the satellite schools did not set an enrollment target, and the same number of boys and girls enrolled as a result.

Implementation is important

While ideas are important, attention to detail in implementation is essential for success. Underlying the three countries' diverse approaches are some constant features. Efforts became successful not simply because of good ideas but also because they were accompanied by the selection of good personnel, by frequent training and

retraining of staff, and by continued review and monitoring during implementation—principles that apply to all dynamic processes.

In the case of efforts to improve the status of girls and women, which call for changing deeply ingrained attitudes and practices, additional measures are required. Constant reminders are needed to persuade community members that the education of women has benefits for themselves and for their communities. Individuals open to changes in gender relations must be identified and brought into the change process as leading actors. It is possible to generate community support, but promises to the community must be fulfilled.

Multifaceted approaches in which various elements support one another appear promising. Interest and enthusiasm must be kept alive through group and individual contact. All this calls for close coordination of the various moving pieces of the innovation as well as for constant fieldwork. As one of the leaders in the Balochistan educational change expressed it:

The model of change should not overpower the situation from outside but let it flow from within. You need to have ownership. We do lots of things that are unnecessary but that are important to maintain constant relationships, making people feel it belongs to them. Much of the lesson we have gained is that it is not the form but the process of letting ideas evolve.

Effective implementation requires staffs with a significant number of women. The greater the involvement of women in the planning process, the more likely that "girl-friendly" measures will be introduced and the more likely that barriers to the participation



Boys and girls learn together in Balochistan

of girls will be identified early. Having more women in decisionmaking positions also allows perceptions of women's conditions to change as students (both girls and boys) come into contact with women in professional roles. Providing more posts for under-qualified female teachers creates opportunities for professional work that were not always available in the villages. Their pay, though modest in comparison with pay in other occupations or with that of certified teachers, enables them to join the public sphere with recognized social status and enables them to think of themselves in more autonomous terms.

Finally, effective implementation requires attention to the basics. At one level, it is important to ensure that efforts to build up a greater demand for education are timed to coincide with available school places (and that plans to increase available places are based on demand). At another level, efforts—such as those in Malawi—to write gender-sensitive textbooks must be supported by the timely and efficient delivery of the textbooks to schools. While incentive programs such as those in Bangladesh and

Balochistan are designed to bring new girls into school, they should be planned to minimize the effect on enrollments in existing schools.

Conclusions

While these lessons will be of assistance, policymakers must also face the question of whether these initiatives to expand and improve the education of girls generate benefits that exceed the costs. This study did not collect program cost data. Clear answers to this question therefore await future evaluations.

One additional finding in these three countries is worth mentioning. Efforts to improve the education of girls also contributed to broader improvements in the education system. By learning about the conditions of girls' education in Balochistan, government officials also learned of numerous "ghost schools," characterized by severe teacher or student absenteeism. In Bangladesh, BRAC's success led to other areas of cooperation between NGOs and the government. And in Malawi, efforts to eliminate obstacles to girls' education prompted actions to eliminate obstacles to the education of boys and to improve the overall quality of education.

Building on Traditional Values in Balochistan

Balochistan is the largest and poorest of the four provinces of Pakistan. It has a very scattered population and distinct tribes with strong notions of family and tribal loyalty and honor. The separation of the social spheres occupied by men and women is strong. Through the influence of the mass media, mass transportation, and immigration into Balochistan, however, residents are gradually becoming aware of the social and economic changes taking place outside their community. Many realize that, given the arid conditions of their territory, one of their greatest resources is their people, who must be educated to achieve a better life.

With a literacy rate of about 10 percent, compared with 26 percent for the country as a whole, Balochistan lags behind the rest of Pakistan. Its dispersed population produces large urban-rural disparities in educational services. In rural areas, men have a literacy rate of 10 percent, women 2 percent (AED 1994). Boys traditionally have enrolled in school in greater numbers than girls, a condition reinforced by the fact that more than 90 percent of the primary schools are for boys (BEMIS 1994). Even in urban areas, participation in primary education is far from universal, with 64 percent of the boys and 46 percent of the girls enrolled. The situation is worse in rural areas, with 30 percent of the boys enrolling and only 3 percent of the girls (AED 1994). Dropout rates are remarkably high, with boys in rural

primary schools registering a 68 percent dropout rate and girls 93 percent.

The main cultural obstacle to girls' education in Balochistan is the traditional belief that women should marry early and stay at home. Unlike in Malawi and Bangladesh, where women and girls contribute daily to laborious tasks of fetching water and fuel, Balochistan culture—because of the seclusion of women—reduces the domestic labor of women to cooking, cleaning, and childrearing. With tribal norms requiring female chastity, working outside the home by women is generally viewed with disapproval. Early marriages, often arranged between families without the bride's consent or even the groom's initiative, have impeded the creation of opportunities to challenge existing norms.

Until a few years ago, government officials—acting on the assumption of limited social demand for the education of girls—contributed to the dismal state of girls' education by not providing enough girls' schools, forcing girls to walk long distances to reach the few schools that did exist or preventing them from attending altogether. While some girls were enrolled in boys' schools, cultural norms mandating the separation of men and women reduced their attendance at schools with male teachers, especially as girls became older.

The government, first with grant support from donor agencies and today with the added assistance of international loans, has since 1990



Community schools are educating girls in Balochistan

implemented measures to expand and improve primary education. These efforts seek to benefit both boys and girls. However, given the particularly weak condition of girls' education, several measures are directed toward girls. Of special interest in Balochistan is the establishment of community schools, which work well because of various supportive measures.

The government created the Primary Education Directorate to address problems in primary education and conducted an education census to take stock of the gender composition within the province. Confirming that there were many more boys' schools than girls' schools, the census also revealed—to the surprise of some government officials—that about 28,000 girls (or 21 percent of all girls in primary enrollment) were attending boys' schools. This local, previously unnoticed effort by families for their daughters' education gave authorities in the Primary Education Directorate confidence that the community would respond positively to efforts to increase schooling for girls.

Expanding the supply of schooling

Massive expansion of classrooms and improvement of school facilities have increased both the availability and accessibility of schools. Benefiting both girls and boys, these measures have been important in developing a sense among the community that the government is interested in providing education for all. Interviews with parents and students reveal that the proximity of the school to their homes has been a major factor in sending children to primary school. In 1983, only 33 percent of the villages in Balochistan had primary schools within one kilometer, and only 6 percent had girls' schools within this distance. Only a few years ago, 60 percent of the schools (3,150 schools) were improvised or "shelterless" schools—structures operated out of buildings that usually had no drinking water or toilet facilities. During 1988–90, no construction funds were assigned to primary schools.

But a school construction program is now in effect. The first priority is building new girls' schools (typically, these

are one-classroom, multigrade schools with capacity for only forty students) and converting temporary girls' schools into permanent classes or schools. The second priority is improving existing girls' schools, the third is replacing temporary boys' schools in which girls are enrolled, and the fourth is replacing temporary boys' schools. To allay parental fears about their daughters' safety, security walls are being built on existing school perimeters. Latrines also are being constructed, with girls' schools the priority.

These measures—greater access to school and improved safety and convenience for girls—are reported as particularly important by parents, teachers, and school administrators. To increase further the participation of girls in schools, the government has decided that all new primary schools will be "genderless" schools, defined to have at least one girl for every three boys. This ratio falls short of parity but is radical in that it shows the government's willingness to educate both sexes in the same buildings.

Community schools for girls

Although the notion of engaging parents in support of schools is not new in other parts of the world, it is a novelty in Balochistan—and certain features contribute to make it a reality. First, community involvement has been greatly facilitated by the work of an NGO familiar with mobilization techniques. Second, provincial authorities, after declarations that they would support the community school, have consistently supported teachers' salaries and the provision of educational materials.

An important actor in the effective mobilization of the community has

been the Society for Community Support for Primary Education in Balochistan, popularly known as "the Society." Though very young (founded in 1993), the Society is staffed by experienced leaders who have attracted young and bright staff members, 80 percent of whom are women. The Society carries out its mobilization efforts through community participation teams, each of which is composed of two community education promoters (a man and a woman), a driver, and a van. The actual mobilization work is conducted by the promoters, who speak at least one local language in addition to Urdu. After teams visited 900 villages, the Society had established 198 girls' primary schools by November 1994.

The requirements for becoming a promoter are strict. The work has been difficult and even risky because it sometimes requires promoters to enter hostile communities to convince reluctant parents of the need to educate girls (box 1). Promoters often must visit a community several times before they can identify "sparks," or people willing and able to act as change agents.

Promoters spend repeated periods of about two months in the field, visiting new communities, monitoring schools assigned to them, and providing technical assistance to communities and schools requesting it. Periodically, the monitors meet as a group in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, to review and exchange experiences and to receive further training.

Convinced parents have played a substantial role in endorsing the concept of community schools for girls. The promoters have assisted in the creation of village education committees (VECs) comprising only fathers, given

Box 1 Fatima—A community education promoter

Fatima, a twenty-six-year-old university graduate, is single. She and Haleem, her male team member, are in the field for two months at a time, monitoring the established schools and exploring possibilities in new villages. Traveling through rural Balochistan is not easy. Sometimes they find no houses in five hours of traveling.

"Our van is full of things: clothing, food, water; we live off the van some days." Fatima says, "In some areas the community is shocked when they see a woman and a man working together, but when they realize we are serious and that they will benefit, they accept us. So far we have visited 117 villages; fourteen were interested but only ten had a girl with a tenth-grade education who could serve as a teacher. We established community schools there. Another twenty to twenty-five villages were interested but could not pull together the resources to get started. Sometimes we run into hostile communities. Other times there are internal disputes about the land for the school. Sometimes it is not easy to work with the district education officers, but we do not try to teach them; we show them the problems we have found and ask if we can be of help. I think that the communities are changing their views about education, but we, the promoters, are accelerating this change."

the separation of the sexes as adults. The VECs have as members only parents of students attending the school—an innovative feature. By establishing dialogue directly with parents, "responsibility for educating children has been placed in the hands of their parents, not in the hands of older family or community members, as is the traditional practice" (O'Grady 1994).

The work of the VECs is not assumed to be automatic: the promoters provide an important double check by ensuring that VEC members visit the schools and meet regularly as a body. To facilitate the creation of community schools, the Society, after an intensive, one-year pilot, developed a fourteen-step sequence (box 2).

The responsibilities of the VECs include securing a facility free of charge to serve as a temporary school, providing security for the school and the teacher, monitoring teacher attendance and performance, monitoring

the daily attendance of children, providing guidance and information to the women in the village, serving as a liaison between students' parents and government educational authorities, and—within three years—finding and transferring a plot of land to the Primary Education Directorate for the construction of a permanent school. Persuaded that parental participation is important, the directorate decided that as of 1995 all new schools would have a formally organized VEC.

Mothers education committees have also been set up in rural areas to engage their close monitoring of the children's cleanliness and attendance. The mothers education committees are proving instrumental in fostering new norms about coming to school regularly, on time, and clean. In a society where women are not supposed to venture beyond their homes, committee members attend monthly meetings regularly, and often are less reluctant than fathers to intervene

Box 2 Fourteen steps in setting up a community school

1. Identify a woman with grade 8 (middle pass) or grade 10 (matric pass) education willing to teach primary school.
2. Verify her residence (not her ancestral home) in the village.
3. Verify her level of education and certificate through the district education officer (DEO).
4. Test the prospective teacher in mathematics and Urdu reading and writing skills.
5. Survey each household in the village to determine the number of households and the number of girls of primary-school age (and also to motivate mothers).
6. At a community meeting attended by at least 75 percent of the parents, form a village education committee (VEC) composed of five to seven fathers of school-age girls. The VEC will act as the official representative of the community before the government.
7. Start the school on three months' probation, during which time the VEC receives training to monitor the school functioning and teaching performance. The education promoters in turn monitor the VEC's performance.
8. Request formal approval for the school and appointment of the teacher from the DEO after the probationary period is successfully completed.
9. Arrange a contract between the VEC and the DEO delineating the responsibilities of both parties.
10. Transfer legal ownership of the land for the school to the Education Department. (The government will construct a new school within three years.)
11. Recommend that the teacher be given training, generally through the Mobile Female Teacher Training Unit.
12. Prepare the temporary school facility. The government appoints the teacher and sends educational materials and supplies to the school.
13. Monitor the school. Monthly visits are conducted by the community education promoters and teacher trainers.
14. Conduct annual community meetings in which parents participate.

when families fail to send their children to school.

Despite the traditional dress of the women and their total lack of schooling, discussions in two mothers education committees revealed that their views can be exceptionally supportive of education. Some, feeling that being illiterate had been a great handicap in their lives, did not want their daughters to be similarly disadvantaged. In their view, education would make the girls better people and better citizens. And they indicated that educated women can become better mothers

and, since the world is progressing so rapidly, education provides a way to catch up with changes.

One mother said that she knows that education reduces prejudices between groups. Another commented that since the government had ignored her community in educational and health matters, the parents themselves had to worry about the education of their children. "We don't say that education is important only for boys," she said. "We also believe that girls should be educated. We need to educate all members of society." The mothers'

views about their daughters' education reflected a notion of the girls' future role as mothers. A common saying is, "Educating a good mother is educating a nation."

The mothers described how they encouraged the schooling of their daughters by ensuring their hair and body cleanliness, by encouraging them not to be absent, and by giving them time to study at home. Several mothers indicated that another way they encouraged their daughters was through rewards: "If my daughter does well in her studies, I fulfill her small wishes, such as preparing her favorite food."

Many mothers are becoming conscious of the need to reduce their daughters' domestic labor by assigning them such tasks as sweeping and childcare less frequently, and instead assuming those tasks themselves. They nevertheless feel that girls must be given home responsibilities "as training for their future life [as wives]." They acknowledged that if the girl reaches sixteen to eighteen years of age

and is still at home, "society wonders why your daughter is not getting married." These mothers were also aware that "if the girl gets married young, all the in-laws will dictate to her, and she will not feel a fully grown person nor become an independent manager in her household because she will not be allowed to develop."

Although almost all of the mothers were illiterate, they showed much respect for education and indicated that they were willing to support their daughters' education as much as possible. When asked, "Are you willing to face an economic sacrifice?" they responded, "Economic sacrifice? It is a girl's right to get education."

Unquestionably, one of the features the mothers liked most about the community school was its proximity to their homes. But other features of the school were also identified as important: having a teacher responsive to parents, being able to visit the school to see classes functioning, and seeing the teacher closely supervise the less crowded classes. It was clear that many



Mothers education committees meet regularly to promote the education of girls

of these perceptions have been shaped by the promoters' frequent visits to the school and community.

The Mobile Female Teacher Training Unit

Teaching in primary schools in rural areas in Balochistan is difficult, especially for women. An effective response by the educators proposing community schools was to train women from the community in which a new school was to operate. To this end, the Mobile Female Teacher Training Unit selects young women from the local villages to attend short-term training for about three months in nearby sites. Not only was their participation in training sessions facili-

tated, but their local residence ensured that they would serve as teachers in the target communities.

The scarcity of women with a minimum level of education to serve as teachers required important changes in the criteria for civil service employment. It was also necessary to raise the level of formal education of several young women in order to enable them to meet the criteria for selection as primary school teachers. In several cases, only male teachers were available in the community. They became temporary teachers while assuming tutorial responsibility for the young women who would later replace them.

Today, the scarcity of women teachers continues. In one community

Box 3 Ruquiya—A teacher who donated her land for the school

A young, unmarried woman in her twenties, Ruquiya has been teaching at Dornan's community school since it was created in March 1992. A man from the village community donated the building for the school; he then decided that he wanted the building back. Until a new building was found, Ruquiya taught her students in an orchard for three months. In fact, Ruquiya donated the land she received from her inheritance for the construction of a permanent school building.

Ruquiya has a deep appreciation of the power of schooling. She faced major resistance from her family when she wanted to go to school. Her mother, who attended school for about two years, defended Ruquiya's right to education and sent Ruquiya and her sister to live with relatives who would be more supportive. Ruquiya was freer in the new village and was able to obtain a tenth-grade education. But her sister was in the hands of relatives who did not allow her to go past grade 8. Today, Ruquiya is tutoring her sister, who she hopes will also become a teacher. Ruquiya is preparing for college-entrance exams.

Ruquiya sees education as very important. She said, "Our traditional problems are so many. That's why the education of girls is so important. After a girl marries, she can give her children a good education, set a good example, and promote cleanliness. The educated mother is smart; the uneducated woman cannot do much for girls."

Ruquiya enjoys her teaching and points out that the same aunts and uncles who used to be against her education are sending their daughters to school today. Why? "They see me working and want their daughters to be like me." Ruquiya, like many other young women teachers in the community schools, is also providing a role model for her students. Asked what occupation they would like to pursue in the future, many of them say "teacher."

school, a girl of fifteen helped the regular teacher handle the second classroom. This young girl had been able to complete grade 5 in the community school, and now the teacher was tutoring her for the exam for grade 10 so that she could qualify as a teacher (box 3).

Because of the reluctance of experienced women teachers to serve as teacher trainers in remote rural areas, the Primary Education Directorate had to rely on male trainers. Fears that the community would oppose male trainers for young female teachers were not realized.

The unit has provided training for most of the teachers serving in the newly formed community schools—279 in June 1995. A powerful incentive for women to become rural teachers has been the government's commitment to establishing regular teaching posts for them, duly registered as a budget item. The unit is now developing a new curriculum (similar to that approved for the Primary Teachers Center), to be given to community school teachers over three consecutive summers.

NGO-government cooperation

The Society has worked in close cooperation with the government. In the Society's view, the work is "a partnership with shared responsibilities." Communication between the Society and the government is constant, ensured by the presence of Society staff at the Primary Education Directorate. Although ties are not free from suspicion, promoters keep regular contact with district education officers (DEOs). Two important points of NGO-government cooperation are when the DEO accepts the community school for pro-



Ruquiya donated land for a new school

bation and when the DEO examines the plan of action proposed by the promoters, discusses it with them, and suggests changes.

A reflection of the solid cooperation between the Society and the government is found in the initiative by government officials to involve DEOs in the first three steps of the community school creation process. According to a high-level education authority (a woman), "The male DEOs move into more villages. Why not make them active in the process of setting up new schools?" An additional device for good and close relations has been the NGO's appointment of a heterogeneous board of directors, with members from the political and intellectual establishment in addition to popular educators.

Growth of community schools

What is remarkable about the community schools is their vigorous expansion and their powerful influence on educational decisionmakers. Many see the community school as a way to modify parental attitudes toward girls' education.

A strong indication of the success of the community schools is their rapid growth. From fourteen in 1992, there

were 279 in June 1995, with 12,000 girls enrolled. With approximately 375,000 boys and 150,000 girls enrolled in primary schools in Balochistan, the girls in community schools represent 8 percent of the girls' enrollment in primary education.

While girls' participation in primary school is still low—at about 29 percent of the total enrollment—their numbers increased by 54 percent between 1990 and 1994. Although the dropout rate for girls between kindergarten and first grade has held at about 40 percent, the dropout rate between grades 1 and 3 now is equal to that of boys. The work of the village education committees and the mothers education committees has been very effective in reducing student absenteeism and dropout.

The growth of community schools will challenge the Society's promoters. Although the Society has been fortunate to attract active and resourceful university graduates, promoters face an increasing number of tasks, from monitoring the schools to responding to requests for new community schools. Efforts are under way to bring NGOs from other parts of the province into primary school work.

New textbooks and other educational materials

In 1992, shortly after the community schools began to function, a unit was created within the Primary Education Directorate to work on textbooks and related teaching aids. Known as the instructional materials development cell and comprising curriculum specialists as well as primary school teachers, this group has been developing and field-testing new materials to implement the centrally designed curriculum. It has produced textbooks with appealing illustrations and clear

texts, exercise books for students, and the first-ever guides for teachers.

The instructional materials development cell has distributed to all schools a box of reading readiness materials for kindergarten, the level with the highest dropout rate. The group also has produced integrated student and teacher materials for grades 1 to 3 (combining Urdu, social studies, sciences, and religion) and expects to test textbooks and related materials for grades 4 and 5 by 1996. According to the plan, new textbooks for all grades will be available for primary school students in Balochistan by 1998.

The instructional materials development cell has produced materials that permit student-centered instruction, such as flash cards and games. It also has been working to ensure equal representation of girls and boys in the illustrations and characters in the textbook stories. And attention is being paid to discussions of the roles that women can play. Some illustrations in the textbooks, for example, depict women joining their husbands on bazaar outings.

Using desktop publishing software, a group of textbook writers that includes curriculum specialists as well as classroom teachers, and instructional technology experts from abroad, the instructional materials development cell is producing low-cost, camera-ready materials that are printed by local firms. This group is demonstrating that in-house production of textbooks can be better tailored to local needs—and inexpensive as well.

Changes in the civil service

Although not intended as a specific strategy for girls' education, several

modifications in the civil service became necessary. An important counterpart to the community education promoters at local levels has been the district education officers of the government's Primary Education Directorate. The separation of students into boys' and girls' schools has traditionally meant the existence of male and female DEOs in charge of boys' and girls' schools, respectively.

When efforts to expand and improve primary education in Balochistan began, most DEOs were male, as were almost all those in higher education positions. Efforts had to be made to enable women to attain the ranking needed to become DEOs (G-18 in the Balochistan civil service). Despite the support of the highest authorities, it took several attempts for this change to become accepted, because of resistance in the mid-level bureaucracy. In 1990, only three women (out of forty) were in a DEO position or above. By 1995, there were eighteen, fourteen of them DEOs. But because there is not a female DEO for every district, some of the fourteen DEOs must cover two or three districts, which results in more fieldwork and less efficient administration.

For primary school teachers, the criteria for hiring had to be lowered to permit recruitment of women with an eighth-grade education—on the condition that they complete the tenth grade within three years. Previously, only women with a tenth-grade education could become teachers. Flexible age limits for female teachers in rural areas were also adopted. In the past, only women eighteen to twenty-five years old could be hired; today, the age range is fourteen to forty years of age. To accelerate hiring, 50 percent of new

entry-level teachers are being recruited at the district level.

Girls' fellowship schools

In both urban and rural areas, girls' fellowship schools operate primarily to facilitate the expansion of girls' education. If a community has more than 200 girls aged four to eight and is not served by government schools, it may be targeted for the fellowship program. The program began in February 1994 and now has twelve urban schools, with nine more to be added in 1996. Thirty rural fellowship schools operated in May 1995.

The fellowship schools started with a donation of 4.5 million rupees (\$150,000) by the provincial government to the Balochistan Education Foundation (an entity created to administer the funds). Social Welfare will donate 25 million rupees in 1996, while an international development agency has promised 32 million rupees. Foundation officials state that the endowment investments have been generating annual profits of 14 to 16 percent, ensuring expansion of the program.

The establishment of a fellowship school follows a procedure similar to that of a community school and involves the Society in the implementation. According to the criteria for setting up a fellowship school, a minimum of 100 girls must be registered. A parents education committee is formed, and a school operator (a man) is appointed to maintain a connection between the community and the education authority (usually DEOs). The school operator must have a tenth-grade education and three years of school management experience and must not be a civil servant. The school operator ensures that the number of

boys does not exceed 25 percent of the total enrollment (box 4).

The Balochistan Education Foundation provides funds for the acquisition of school materials, supplies, and facilities equivalent to 200 rupees per registered girl. The foundation also grants each fellowship school 10,000 rupees a year to cover the fees of girls (100 rupees per girl) and 5,000 rupees at the end of each quarter as an attendance bonus. The subsidy is gradually decreased each year to force the community to become self-sufficient. The fellowship school requires the community to save 50 percent of the quarterly 5,000-rupee grant, so that by the end of three years reserves will enable the school to absorb some costs.

The parents education committee negotiates with the school operator on matters of fees, uniforms, syllabus, and selection of teachers. Both parties set up a joint bank account, and then look for a suitable building. The committee and the school operator decide which 100 girls will be covered by the subsidy. Parents pay 15 to 25 rupees a month for the tuition of each of their daughters. Boys who wish to enroll in these schools must pay 50 rupees or more (each fellowship school sets its own fees).

Fellowship schools may not survive without external support. But because they are more easily monitored and less expensive than other private schools, they have attracted a positive

Box 4 Mohammed—A school operator

Mohammed is excited about leading a fellowship school. He is in favor of girls' education even though his reasoning has some conventional parameters. "Education is good for girls," he says. "An educated girl can make a lot of difference in her home. If she becomes a doctor, she can serve other women in the community. There is no problem with a woman earning money. A girl who is not married can earn money for her dowry. Teaching is a good occupation for women because many schools do not allow men to teach."

Mohammed and the parents education committee with which he works closely like to participate in school management because it enables them to motivate parents and to change their views. He and the committee members have divided their work by block. Each person covers twenty houses. He acknowledges that the mobilization effort on behalf of girls' schooling was "very hard in the beginning." They marked the houses that were resistant and visited some five times. One man hid every time Mohammed tried to reach him, so Mohammed sent someone else to knock on the door. When the man answered, several parents spoke to him.

Many girls did not come to register, so Mohammed and the committee sent the teacher to speak with the mothers. The initial target was 100 girls. They now have 130 and good attendance. But families are still more interested in the education of boys. "Every day parents bring two to three boys to school. I refer them to a nearby private school. We charge boys 100 rupees in admission fees and 80 rupees monthly if they are not from the survey area. We have no more room for them."

Mohammed has two stores in the community's bazaar, but he likes his association with students and the community so much that he has hired a friend to run his stores.

response from the community. School education committees made up of parents manage them, but since parents are generally poor and inexperienced, close monitoring of the committees is needed.

A major impact evaluation of these schools is being carried out by the Policy Research Department of the World Bank and a group of Pakistani researchers. It will examine the impact on girls in particular.

Home schools

Unlike community schools, home schools rely on contributions from private sector donors, such as Pakistan's Habib Bank Trust. The schools also aim at expanding NGO-government participation in education.

Home schools serve low-income urban areas. Students pay only 5 to 10 rupees to attend the school. Twelve such schools now operate, and another eighteen are scheduled to open by October 1995.

Before setting up a home school, it is first established that there are at least sixty girls in the community who are not attending school. A local woman between fifteen and forty-five years of age is selected as a teacher. She must have at least a tenth-grade education. After ten days of orientation, she is assigned no more than sixty girl students. A mothers education committee also is formed. After a probation period lasting one to two months, the Society formally appoints the teacher and signs an agreement with her.

There are some concerns about home schools, however. They tend to be housed in any spare space that the community may find available, and some have little room for expansion. And although the schools have succeeded in serving low-income stu-

dents, they are finding it difficult to serve mostly girls.

Food incentive program

To encourage students in low-income areas to attend classes, vegetable oil was distributed to them monthly. According to government officials, this doubled enrollments. In some cases, however, it was at the expense of nearby community schools, as enrollments shifted toward the schools involved in the program. Because the transportation and distribution of oil is cumbersome, the government is pilot-testing the distribution of food stamps valued at 100 rupees.

Government commitment to women's education

In the 1995-96 budget, Balochistan assigned 24 percent of development spending to education, including a substantial amount for primary schooling. Moreover, the government is committed to redressing the gender imbalance. All new schools will be genderless, and all will be government-community partnerships and have VECs.

Successes and challenges

In Balochistan, community schools, as well as fellowship and home schools, are less crowded and show better attendance than regular government schools. Classrooms are more cheerful, with posters often lining their walls and teachers showing more interest in their students and classrooms. Community-supported schools also appear to be cleaner and better maintained.

The linguistic diversity of the province is a challenge for the schools. There are several local languages—Balochi, Phasto, Brahui, Sindhi, Sir-aiki, Hindko, and Punjabi. Classes are

conducted in Pakistan's national language, Urdu, which is spoken by less than 2 percent of the Balochis, forcing children to learn in a foreign language. This difficulty may explain the stubbornly high dropout rate between kindergarten and grade 1.

Recitation and rote continue to be the main modes of learning. Even so, better books are reaching students, and teachers are receiving training and being supported by teacher guides.

Many of the students are older girls from very poor households whose parents were not sending them to school. Given the cultural concern for girls' safety in Balochistan, the proximity of the new schools to the community was crucial in the decision to let the girls attend school. Having access to free (or almost free) schooling is important, too, but it appears to be more a reinforcing than a determining factor.

For the older girls, the domestic routine has not changed much. They are still responsible for many household chores, although mothers are slowly allowing them time for studies. Being taught by a woman is often identified by girl students as an important

reason for liking school. Moreover, most girls hope for further education (to either tenth or twelfth grade), and the most popular choices for a career are teaching and nursing (box 5).

Expansion of girls' schooling is producing a powerful demonstration effect within the province. Educators report that many girls are going beyond eighth grade. Girls who dropped out after grades 5 and 6 are reentering school; others are getting private coaching and taking the exam for primary school completion so that they can move into secondary school.

According to one person knowledgeable about community conditions, "In the past, a girl in an enlightened rural house would not have gone beyond fifth grade. Today, girls are pursuing more education. Perhaps a strong incentive is seeing that many women are becoming primary school teachers."

An international expert providing technical assistance to the government to expand and improve primary education reported, "The people are now conversant about the role of the community in education. In the past,

Box 5 Farida—A newcomer to school

Farida is a twelve-year-old girl with two brothers and five sisters. Her parents have no schooling. When her brothers and her older sister attended school, she was kept at home to help her mother, by cleaning the house, cooking, washing clothes, and taking care of her three younger sisters. Although she had not been interested in school before, after the promoters visited her home she saw possibilities for her education. She also enjoyed listening to the stories one of her neighbors told about attending school.

Farida is now enrolled in grade 1 and attends school with a younger sister who is in kindergarten. She thinks education is important but cannot explain why. She believes that having a school close to her home has enabled her to attend. Farida now can read and write in Urdu. Asked to read a passage from her textbook, she did so fluently and with confidence. Farida thinks she will complete high school and then get a job, probably as a nurse.

landowners, tribal heads, and the political leaders were the actors; now the community members are the ones listened to by the DEOs."

The experience of Balochistan offers optimism for the future. In communities that have long denied women access to education, there is now a willingness to work toward redressing what a high educational official calls the "deprivation of the young girl-child." An educational census revealed that many girls were attending boys' schools, an indication of the latent demand for girls' education. And rural communities—and particularly unschooled mothers—have organized themselves to support girls' education. The Society, with its door-to-door mobilization program, was crucial in persuading parents to change their opinions about the education of their daughters. It also seems that the views of many parents had been assumed rather than canvassed.

The strong collaboration between the Society and the government works because neither claims ownership of

the expertise. Whatever doubts may have existed regarding the Society are being dispelled as communities become beneficiaries of the new schools. Work at the community level has been possible because of the regular visits by the promoters to communities. The costs of the Society's assistance have been underwritten by international development agencies, although community schools are now becoming regular schools and being absorbed into the state education system.

Clearly, the mobilization work of the Society would represent an added cost to the government if it were incorporated into the education budget. However, while mobilization plays a critical role in awakening the interest in, and demand for, girls' schooling, this role need not be permanent. After five or ten years of Society work, community perceptions about female and male education may have changed so much that special awareness and mobilization efforts are no longer necessary.

Making Schooling Free, Compulsory, and Gender-Sensitive in Malawi

About 85 percent of the population of Malawi lives in rural areas, subsisting on small plots of land and using simple tools. The low level of available technology results in heavy domestic work for women, who account for most food production. Girls help their mothers with domestic tasks such as fetching water, hauling wood, and grinding maize. About 68 percent of girls report engaging in domestic chores, compared with 39 percent of boys. Although women contribute substantially to the agrarian economy, girls in many poor families are seen as burdens—hence the desire to marry them off early.

Parents have cited various constraints to sending their girls for schooling: the need to rely on the girls for domestic work, crowded classrooms, the distance to schools, and school fees and other school expenses. Malawi, indeed, has a shortage of schools and classrooms. Many classes are held in schoolyards. Under the hot sun, students battle to read and write. When it rains, there is considerable disturbance as students who have been studying outside must crowd into classrooms to continue their school day.

Educationally, women are worse off than men, with a literacy rate of 35 percent compared with 60 percent for men in the 15–45 year age group. In general, the proportion of girls who enroll in primary school is smaller than that of boys (48 percent, compared with 53 percent). Only 15 percent of

girls (compared with 21 percent of boys) who enter primary school continue to grade 8. A smaller share of girls than boys passes the Primary School Leaving Certificate examination.

Malawi is trying to improve both the quantity and quality of its educational system. Further, it is making serious attempts to improve the condition of girls' education. A mosaic of efforts, all based on ideas well supported by the literature, have been instituted since 1992. They include the construction of more schools and more housing for teachers, the elimination of direct costs for girls, the provision of more and better educational materials, the gender sensitization of the teaching force, and the mobilization of the community in favor of girls' schooling.

Reducing educational costs

While the government has traditionally provided free textbooks at the primary level, it also has required tuition fees. Because in a number of studies parents identified fees as a major barrier to the participation of girls in school, the government in 1992 adopted a decision that is bold in the East African context: abolishing tuition fees for girls. A crucial supporter of this idea was the then-minister of education, a member of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) (box 6).

During 1992–94 fees were abolished for nonrepeating girl students in

grades 2 through 8. Education was not made totally free, since parents still had to buy notebooks, pencils, and other educational supplies and pay the school maintenance fees. But many educational actors—parents, teachers, principals, ministry officials—state that the elimination of fees had a significant impact on enrollment. Some observers believe that this impact was psychological as much as financial because the reduction of fees affirmed the importance of girls' education and thus acted as an incentive to improve performance (Robinson, Davison, and Williams 1994).

The precise change in girls' enrollment is uncertain. According to officials, during the first year of the tuition waiver, girls enrolling in grade 1 sur-

passed boys for the first time. Ministry statistics also indicate that the overall primary enrollment of girls rose from 45 percent (760,718 students) to 47 percent (847,974 students) with the introduction of the tuition waivers (MOEST 1993). The story of one student, Manis, is illustrative (box 7). Overall attendance increased from 30 percent in 1988–89 to 38 percent in 1992–93, including significant increases in the transition from grade 1 to grade 2.

In September 1994, shortly after a multiparty coalition came to power, the government decided to waive fees for all primary school students. One government statistic reports an increase of 103 percent in total enrollment between 1993–94 and 1994–95,

Box 6 Forum for African Women Educationalists

Founded in 1992, and based in Nairobi, Kenya, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is a unique organization. It brings together thirty-seven African women in high-level positions, such as ministers of education, vice-chancellors of universities, and other senior women policymakers in education. They meet regularly to improve the policy dialogue on issues affecting the condition of women's and girls' education in the region.

FAWE has a broad agenda. It attempts to shape educational policies; to encourage governments, donors, and NGOs to promote women's education; to gather data and conduct research studies; to help NGOs expand their work in basic education; and, through the media, to build public awareness of the social and economic advantages of women's education. According to FAWE, its main accomplishments have been to focus policy decisions on gender issues and to prove that government can make a difference.

FAWE is particularly interested in girls' educational access and the content of textbooks. Some FAWE publications, such as the *ABC of Gender Analysis*, help in the analysis of gender portrayal in textbooks and related educational materials. Indeed, FAWE found that "women and girls are marginalized and devalued in most African textbooks." According to FAWE, "Women and girls are mentioned fewer times than men and boys. When they are mentioned, they are portrayed as passive, dependent, weak, fragile, and even dumb, engaged mainly in nonremunerative or poorly paid, less prestigious occupations" (FAWE 1994, p. 5). FAWE is also examining school dropouts and adolescent pregnancies.

FAWE is supported by a network of international development agencies. It has received a UNESCO award for its contribution to women's education in Africa.

from 1.5 million to 3.1 million students. Girls showed a slightly higher increase, at 105 percent. Another official source indicates growth from 1.9 million in 1993-94 to 3.2 million in 1994-95, an increase of 68 percent. In any case, primary school enrollment expanded. But the disparities between girls and boys in access to school continue because the special incentive for girls has disappeared.

The consequences of waived tuition fees for all seem to have been mixed. The general waiver increased enrollment substantially but reportedly colored community attitudes toward education. Several principals and teachers affirm that parents feel that if education is indeed free, the government should supply all materials. As a result, there has been a marked tendency by parents to avoid any educational investment.

Relaxing the requirement that students wear uniforms—another gov-

ernment policy change—also seems to have encouraged greater participation of girls in schooling. The new policy states that students cannot be expelled for failing to wear uniforms. The cost of uniforms is about ten times greater than that of fees, which at most reach 7 kwacha (about \$1.70). The relaxed rules on uniforms have also had mixed results. According to parents, it is a relief not to have to buy uniforms. But many principals believe that uniforms create cohesion among the students (each school has its own uniform) and help mask class distinctions.

Funds that had been used to subsidize the tuition fees for girls in primary school (\$2 million) will now be assigned to scholarships for girls at the secondary level. Increased opportunities for secondary education are also expected to affect primary education by providing girls with an incentive to continue their schooling or to perform well. It will be important to assess the

Box 7 Manis—Returning to school

Manis comes from a large family, having five older brothers and two younger sisters. She gets up at 6 a.m., sweeps the house, and makes two or three trips (twenty minutes each) to draw water from the well. After school she does the dishes and draws more water "whenever required," sometimes into the evening. On Fridays, she does not attend school. She takes maize to the mill for grinding. She is also absent from the classroom on the days that she feels her clothes are dirty and she cannot wash them because there is no soap. None of her brothers helps at home.

Manis is fifteen years old and now in grade 3. She had an initiation rite at age eight and another last year. She remembers being told then that she should be a good mother and take care of her children. She left school in 1991 because her family could not pay the expenses. She came back this year because she heard that no fees are required. In her view, "education is important because later you can secure a job, be independent, and help your family. If you are not independent, you have to ask people for money, you cannot buy what you want. If a girl is educated, she becomes knowledgeable and marries later; but first she gets an education. I am not interested in marriage. I have friends who are married and have problems: they don't have soap or clothing; they have children and are not able to feed them." Manis is getting low grades because she "came back after several years." She would like to complete grade 8 and become a teacher.

impact of this measure after it is implemented.

Accommodating more students

New classrooms are being built to meet the needs of additional students. Some community involvement in the construction of schooling is taking place, although it seems to depend on the initiative of school principals. There is at present, however, a deficit of about 30,000 classrooms and almost 40,000 teacher houses. According to 1994 official statistics, the teacher-student ratio is estimated to be 1:72, and the classroom-student ratio is even worse at 1:119. This situation clearly reveals an increasing tension between quantity (expanded enrollment) and quality in Malawi.

Learning often occurs under difficult conditions. Most students sit on the floor of dark and dusty rooms. On average, four students share one book. Furniture is rare and if available is provided only for fourth and fifth graders. Children use their educational materi-

als intensively, so by the end of the academic year they are displaying cramped notebooks and minuscule pencils. Much learning occurs through extensive copying from the blackboard and reading and repeating in chorus, making it difficult to know which students have understood and which are merely mouthing the text.

Curriculum changes

To ensure that textbooks give attention to gender issues, a Gender Appropriate Curriculum Unit was established in 1992 at the Malawi Institute of Education. Initially staffed by only one person, the unit added a second staffer in 1994. One concentrates on curriculum and textbooks, the other on training.

The review of textbooks by the gender unit found substantial disparities, with more than 300 references to men and only 17 to women. Women who were represented were shown crying or carrying babies or water. Men were often identified with managerial and other high-status jobs and roles, while women were associated with the home.

The textbooks for grades 1 and 2 had already been developed when the gender specialist was appointed, so she produced supplementary materials such as flip charts with illustrations presenting women and girls in non-traditional activities. (Unfortunately, these supplementary materials have not yet been printed.) The textbooks for grade 3 and above will be gender-sensitive, and revised textbooks for all grades will be in the schools by 1998. So far, only the new, gender-sensitive textbooks for grade 3 have reached the classroom.

The distribution of textbook materials throughout the school system



Manis is trying to overcome obstacles to gaining an education

remains a problem. Most informants, including education authorities, characterize the supply of learning materials as dismal. Observation in various schools close to the end of the academic year revealed that some grades had not yet received their textbooks.

Teacher expansion and training

The government has taken steps to increase the number of trained teachers by compressing the program in teacher training centers from two years to one.

In response to the increased enrollment produced by eliminating school fees, some 22,000 new teachers were added. These new teachers and others already in the system have received some training in gender issues. But according to the Gender Appropriate Curriculum Unit leader, "It boiled down to one hour out of two weeks." She also encountered substantial opposition from some men: "You are violating the culture. You want us to wear dresses," are statements she heard frequently. Female teachers represent 35 percent of the primary teaching

force, and a similar proportion is enrolled in the Teacher Training Colleges. There is no policy to bring in more women as teachers, however.

Research into instructional practices in Malawi reveals that teachers favor boys during lessons, that girls are sometimes ridiculed for failing to answer what a teacher believes is a simple question, and that boys generally serve as leaders in practical science lessons (Hauya 1993). Consequently, the sensitization of teachers to girl-friendly learning environments is now included in all teacher training. Gender-sensitive case study approaches were completed in the first phase of the GABLE project, and there are plans to incorporate them into the teacher training center curriculum. Interviews with teachers who received the gender training showed that these individuals had a good understanding of gender-fair practices (box 8).

To expand suitable girl-friendly practices in the classroom, the three assistant regional educational officers for girls will expand their role to include providing in-service training on gender issues. Inspectors also have

Box 8 Ms. Malabi—A new way of seeing the classroom

Ms. Malabi, a certified teacher, has worked in schools since 1985. She likes the new curriculum, which she finds easy to follow. It also identifies activities she can do with her large classes of fifth-grade students. She received in-service training for the new curriculum in 1993. Recalling what she had learned on gender practices in the classroom, she said, "We should not be gender-biased. Every subject should consider both boys and girls. And the lessons should give opportunities to girls and boys. This knowledge has helped me a lot. When we were doing practicals on physical education, some girls did not like to become involved because they felt girls should not do some exercises, such as jumping, for instance. I told them that they should not be shy and that girls can do many things boys can do. I have also changed my assignments of manual work in the classroom. I now ask boys to sweep the classroom and wash windows, not just girls. I also make sure that girls are not left out when I'm asking questions."

received gender-sensitization training, so they should contribute to new teaching practices in the classroom.

Social mobilization campaigns

Social mobilization, which its proponents vehemently contrast with social marketing, is predicated on the notion that most change comes from face-to-face contact and that theater can be an effective way of discovering deep-seated feelings—and thus a potent vehicle for attitudinal change.

Social mobilization efforts have been using the resources of the Department of Fine and Performance Arts at Chancellor College (University of Malawi). A pilot project in Machinga District during 1994 attempted to identify ways of transmitting to rural communities the idea that primary education for girls is useful to the individual and to society. Through a process called Theater for Develop-

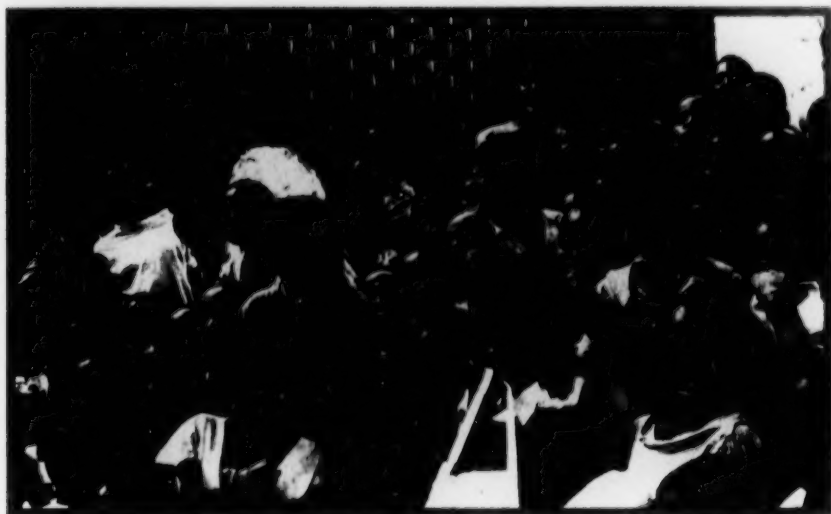
ment (box 9), drama students have been able to make explicit the repressed fears that act as powerful constraints to girls' education: parental fears that daughters might become pregnant while attending school, of sexual harassment by teachers, and of prostitution and gambling by girls. Cultural practices—such as prepubescent and pubescent initiation rites, which remain a taboo in everyday discourse in the community—surfaced as a result of the relaxation and personal involvement brought on by the improvised plays. Initiation rites, in general, act as powerful inhibitors of girls' education. Girls who are initiated sexually and told that marriage is the most important social state for women reportedly feel that they are adults and ready for marriage.

In Malawi, where television is nonexistent and many adults cannot read, an educational campaign emphasizing person-to-person and small-

Box 9 The Theater for Development

Borrowing techniques of popular theater first developed in Latin America, the Theater for Development troupe involves students of drama in the production of plays that have relevance for rural Malawian communities. Drama and music students spend several days in communities as participant observers—hauling water, tending fields, paying respect at funerals, or witnessing initiation ceremonies. They talk informally with community residents to learn about their fears, aspirations, and frustrations regarding girls' education. Throughout their residence in the community, the students discuss the findings with one another and identify storylines that can be turned into plays.

At the end of their stay, the troupe performs a play designed to engage the audience in dialogue with the actors. This is the "opening up" strategy of the play. The dialogue is used to present the findings of the troupe and to identify further the points most likely to sensitize the community. The troupe later returns to the community with more refined messages and discusses with each of several groups (parents, girls, teachers, local leaders, the school committee, initiation counselors, and so on) the most effective ways of disseminating messages about girls' education. The troupe then disseminates the messages through posters, radio dramas, songs, and face-to-face communication.



Large groups of children are attending school in Malawi

group communication and involving extension and rural workers is expected to enable communities to find solutions to problems of girls' education. Government officials intend to go nationwide with the social mobilization campaign next year. Involved in the dissemination effort will be the community development assistants, members of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Community Services. Each community development assistant is responsible for initiating and supervising community-based activities in ten to twenty villages.

Changing pregnancy policies

Various surveys in Malawi indicate that pregnancy is the most common reason that girls drop out of school. Accounting for 76 percent of girl dropouts, pregnancy is a far greater cause of leaving school than the second most common—illness, which accounts for 10 percent of the dropouts. In the past, pregnant girls were expelled from school, curtailing their education.

Through the lobbying of a task force spearheaded by the Gender Appropriate Curriculum Unit leader, the ministry of education adopted a new policy on pregnancy in December 1993. This policy mandates that a pregnant girl should be "withdrawn from school for one academic year and be readmitted upon application as long as there is assurance of safe custody for the child" (Secretary of Education 1993). The policy also states that "a school boy who is responsible for a school girl's pregnancy shall be withdrawn for one academic year and be readmitted upon application." What is important about the policy is that it acknowledges the problem of pregnancy and no longer marginalizes the girl. Also important is that, for the first time, there are sanctions for male students.

The policy has been transmitted to all education authorities, but little is known about its impact. Some primary school principals report that several girls have returned to school; other sources indicate that several secondary

school principals are reluctant to implement the new policy.

Drawing a balance

Several efforts have taken place in Malawi to increase the number of girls in primary school. The elimination of fees for girls acts as an incentive, and the curriculum has been modified to include gender-balanced material. In addition, training for teachers in gender-sensitive instruction, albeit brief, appears to have had a desirable impact, and more regular in-service training on gender issues is planned. Finally, a highly promising social mobilization campaign will go nationwide next year and should shift community and teacher perceptions toward greater support for girls' education.

Despite these efforts, however, progress has been slow. One problem is the inability of the system to take on

additional students. There are severe classroom, teacher, and housing shortages. Another problem may be the administration of the system—in particular, the distribution of textbooks to schools.

A third problem that affects girls is that, although education authorities are receptive to the idea of overcoming gender disparities in schools, no internal group is pulling all of these initiatives together and fostering greater ownership among ministry staff. The dispersal of the ministry units working on the various initiatives does not promote the sharing of information—so a change in ethos has not emerged. There is some parental awareness of the need for further education of girls. But the potential contribution of parents is neither sufficiently fostered by education officials nor enhanced by the efforts of any organization.

Creating Partnerships for Education in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has increased primary enrollments considerably since 1992. But although primary schools operate two shifts a day, at least 4 million children are denied access to primary education. Because girls constitute 47 percent of primary school students, many education authorities assert that there is almost total equality for girls and boys—and that gender imbalances mostly affect the secondary level and above.

Primary school completion rates are low, at around 43 percent in 1993. Girls represent 45 percent of those enrolled in the last year of primary but only 37 percent of those enrolled in the first year of secondary schooling (1991 data). The gradual but substantial loss of girls through all levels of schooling has been attributed to the heavy demand for girls' domestic work and the difficult access to rural schools.

Government actions

The government is expanding access to primary education and emphasizing completion. It has established the Primary and Mass Education Division, a special structure to address primary education, and is enforcing the law on compulsory primary education. The new division, which reports to the prime minister, reportedly enables much greater cooperation from all ministries and much better follow-up of supervisors' and inspectors' fieldwork. Education authorities are trying mechanisms to reduce the opportunity cost of girls going to school and to cre-

ate girl-friendly environments in the schools.

Compulsory education, though promulgated in 1990, was not forcefully implemented until 1992, when specific geographical areas were targeted. According to government officials, this enforcement has increased enrollment in targeted areas from 75 percent to 90 percent, even though daily attendance rates have oscillated between 50 and 60 percent (Primary and Mass Education Division 1995).

Since the early 1990s the government has engaged in a vigorous process of primary school construction, but the current supply of schools meets just slightly more than half the potential need. Access to a school remains a dream for many villages.

Community schools offering grades 1 to 5 are being built on sites where there are no schools within 2 to 3 kilometers. The community donates the land for the school and gives the government about \$250 for maintenance of the school. The government appoints the teachers and provides books and educational materials for students. Teacher ratios are maintained at 60 percent women and 40 percent men. Today there are 800 community schools.

To encourage girls to continue their education, the government offers them stipends and tuition allowances at the secondary level. This incentive is expected to increase participation of girls in primary school, who now see possibilities for further education, but

there are as yet no assessments of the impact of the subsidies.

One of the most innovative measures to expand the number of primary school students in Bangladesh is the use of NGOs. As part of a government experiment begun in 1993, seventeen NGOs are implementing various educational programs, fourteen in rural areas and three in urban areas. These NGOs are running about 4,000 schools or centers with a total enrollment of 160,000 students, most of them six to ten years old—and 56 percent of them are girls.

The NGOs have different experience with and knowledge of primary education. They offer programs that range from two to three hours of classes per day, that provide from two to five grades of schooling, and that use the same government curriculum or offer their own. All the programs seek to achieve 70 percent enrollment for girls and to hire female teachers.

Working with NGOs: The BRAC model

The best known of the NGO models is the program of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). Even before the government's current experiment, BRAC had been providing nonformal primary education programs for children between the ages of eight and fourteen. It currently runs almost 30,000 schools or centers, with a total student population of nearly 900,000. (Under the new experiment, BRAC takes responsibility for 900 centers serving some 28,000 students.)

These BRAC-run primary schools aim for a school register of at least 75 percent girls. Many of the girls in the BRAC-run schools either never went to school or dropped out in grade 1.

BRAC schools offer:

- A teacher-student ratio of 1:33, compared with the 1:66 ratio frequently found in public schools.
- Rather than examinations, continuous evaluation of students. (Fear of exams apparently keeps many children away from school.)
- A continuous school year broken only by two ten-day vacations a year. Long vacations are avoided because children quickly forget what they have learned.
- No homework that requires parental help. Most parents are illiterate and could not assist.
- Avoidance of physical punishment of students.

Parents are encouraged to monitor student and teacher attendance. Teachers meet with parents every month, depending on the farming season, and decide together on the school schedule.

Before setting up the schools, BRAC personnel survey parents on the demand for schools, the number of eligible children, the availability of qualified teachers, the proximity of existing schools, and so on. Help is sought from local political and religious leaders, parents, and community organizations. A list of potential students is drawn up and checked against enrollments in local government schools in order to ensure that any students previously enrolled in those schools have indeed dropped out.

One school room is opened for every thirty-three students, giving preference to girls. The community and local landowners help to choose the school site and build the classroom, usually a bamboo or mud-walled construction with a thatched or tin roof. The schools do not have toilets or tubewells; use is made of those in nearby homes.



A proud Bangladeshi mother who now has two daughters attending school

Each BRAC school's group of thirty-three students begins schooling together in first grade and moves together to third grade. BRAC school teachers must be married residents of the village (to avoid losing personnel, especially women, to spousal transfers) and have nine years of schooling. About 80 percent of BRAC teachers are women. Once selected, teachers are given twelve days of training at a nearby training center, supplemented by one-day refresher courses at various local sites. The teachers receive an average monthly remuneration of 500 thaka, about \$12.

Each school is run by a management committee comprising three parents, a community leader, and the teacher. Checks and balances ensure performance at all levels. Area managers (responsible for 500 schools) supervise teams-in-charge (responsible for eighty schools), which supervise and train program organizers and program assistants (responsible for fifteen schools). Area managers are stationed in the field and have high levels of education (a master's degree). This structure is supervised by a monitoring unit dealing specifically with non-formal primary education (box 10).

BRAC has been examining gender issues in both its organization and its curriculum. To support the promotion of women within the BRAC structure, the NGO created a Gender Resource Center in 1994. It is providing opportunities for women to reach administrative positions by allowing teachers to become program assistants. Throughout rural Bangladesh today, women can be seen driving scooters and bicycles—in all probability BRAC program assistants, who must visit every school at least twice a week. The supervisory position represents both a career and a financial upgrade, as its salary is four times that of a classroom teacher.

An essential unit in the BRAC organization is the logistics unit, which supplies educational materials to the vast network of BRAC schools. The unit is exceptionally effective, with clearly identified storage and delivery procedures. The logistics unit is also under the eye of the nonformal primary education (NFPE) monitoring unit.

Classes in BRAC schools are run in remarkably similar ways. Classrooms are cheerfully decorated, with heavy use of posters and displays of student work. Students are well groomed and bring to school a set of books, notebooks, and other educational materials. The number of students, thirty-three, creates a manageable class and allows the teacher to interact with and follow the performance of all students (box 11).

In addition, there is significant student-centered instruction. In social studies classes in particular, students undertake several independent projects, often with role playing. To foster confident personalities, the curriculum includes forty minutes a day of

dancing, singing, and poetry reading. The girls appeared comfortable performing in public. Asked what they liked most about the school, the girls said classes and teachers, but many also referred to the games, songs, and poems.

The BRAC primary school curriculum initially centered on the needs of rural children. But since most students seek further education, the curriculum is gradually incorporating parts of the formal curriculum—English and religious studies, for instance.

BRAC schools meet three hours a day, six days a week, 270 days a year. They compare favorably with government schools, whose students generally attend two hours a day in grades 1

and 2 (four hours in grades 3 to 5) and have two long vacations, one during Ramadan and the other during the summer.

Since adolescent girls who complete three years of schooling often marry soon afterward and discontinue their studies, BRAC is setting up small village libraries for them. These libraries also operate as extension centers. In addition to books and games, seeds of nutritious vegetables are distributed there, and some training in homestead poultry farming and tailoring has been offered to about 16,000 people.

According to BRAC, there is a high rate of completion (95 percent), and student transfers into grade 4 in the public school system averaged 78

Box 10 Jharna—A BRAC program organizer

Jharna, who is twenty-five years old, has a higher-secondary certificate (the equivalent of two years of college) in community development. She has been at BRAC for three years. She helped another program organizer to get the school started. They first did a door-to-door survey of the people in the area, which identified the children in landless households and those who had never gone to school. They also identified possible teachers, who were interviewed by BRAC members.

Jharna explains the process: "Those interviewed were asked their level of education; they were also asked to read sections from a book and to write their address. The women selected as BRAC teachers promised not to have children for three years. They also agreed to go anywhere in Bangladesh for training."

Jharna is responsible for monitoring twelve schools, which she must visit at least twice a week. She presents reports at parents meetings and makes sure that at least 90 percent of parents attend the meetings. She also makes sure that parents assume responsibility for maintaining attendance by students and teachers.

Jharna was recruited locally and had to complete one year's probation. "You have to be on your toes all the time," she says. "If student attendance is poor and you do not communicate this to parents, you can be fired." She considers working for BRAC a learning experience: "I have met so many interesting people. We are all enthusiastic because we like the idea of building a nation, helping the poor. I have a good salary and live with my family. The people at the top are ideal. There is good communication between regional and central workers." Jharna notes that she also likes working with families and visiting them in their home to reinforce the need for girls' education.

Box 11 Meena—Playing the roles of student and mother's helper

Meena is attending a BRAC school now in its third-grade cohort. It was possible for her to attend this school because, unlike the government school, it is close to her home. A younger sister goes to a nearby BRAC school and is in the first-grade cohort. Meena is ten years old and has five siblings, including an older brother. She performs many household chores. She wakes up at 6 a.m. and starts cooking. She helps her mother prepare breakfast, washes herself, and then goes to school. When she returns, she helps her mother cook dinner, bathes her siblings, feeds them, and puts them to bed. Since she is the oldest girl, she has to do everything at home, including putting the hens and ducks in their pens. Her mother is a peddler; her father looks after the crops. Neither parent went to school.

Meena can read and write Bangla well. She likes her lessons, particularly her English book, and her teacher's explanations. She feels education is important to lead a good life. "Those who are educated are not blind; those who are not educated have their eyes but they are blind." Meena would like to serve people. She wants to be a nurse when she grows up.

percent over seven years. A recent independent preliminary evaluation indicates that student attendance is significantly higher in NGO schools than in satellite schools (Sedere 1995a). Dropout rates are also lower in all BRAC programs than in government schools.

Government views of NGOs

Despite the performance of the NGOs, government officials are ambivalent about them. The NGOs are appreciated for their ability to reach remote populations and for their flexible programs. But some government officials criticized the NGOs for offering a different curriculum from the one in public schools, for offering programs of short duration, for hiring teachers with low levels of education and paying them low salaries, and for spending too little time on religious education.

Some spontaneous competition has emerged between programs. Children enrolled in public schools have left to join BRAC schools, where there are no

fees or charges (even notebooks, slates, and writing materials are free). According to BRAC staff, however, their schools suffered when the government introduced its popular Food for Education Program, which shifted students toward public schools.

Many officials are unsure about the main purpose of NGO programs in primary education. From one perspective, the goal of the NGOs is to give girls access to a basic education suited for rural life. This calls for a simplified curriculum and flexible scheduling. From another angle, the goal could be to function as a stepping stone for students to transfer into public schools for additional education. The latter view would mean moving the NGO curriculum closer to the official curriculum and presumably scrapping the NGOs' innovative and successful approaches to nonformal primary education.

Government officials cannot state which NGO model works best and whether these programs are more cost-effective than the government pro-

grams. Per-student costs of the NGO programs ranged from 341 to 939 thaka (\$8–\$12). Given the substantial diversity in the offerings of these NGOs, reaching a precise conclusion about their overall cost effectiveness will be difficult.

Satellite schools

This experimental program, which has operated since 1992 and is coordinated by the director of satellite schools within the education ministry, expands access to primary education for all children by establishing schools in villages more than 3 kilometers from a government primary school. These schools offer grades 1 and 2 (in a few cases, grade 3) and are linked to a "mother school," which accepts students on completion. Each school has two classrooms, each with a maximum capacity of fifty-five students. Girls are given preference, but there are no specific quotas for admission. All the teachers are women. They are paid modest monthly salaries of 500 thaka (about \$12). Parents select the teacher, who must have a tenth grade education.

The creation of a satellite school begins with the formation of a school management committee involving the local administrative authority. Other committee members include the education authority for that village, a female member of the community nominated by the education authority, the satellite school teachers, the headmaster of the mother school, and various other community members. This committee secures temporary facilities, basic furniture, and a blackboard and chalk. It also monitors the school's functioning. The committee must donate land for the school building, which is constructed by the govern-

ment. The number of satellite schools has been stable, at 200 nationwide since the program's inception, with a total enrollment of 21,000 students.

The satellite school teachers are expected to conduct meetings for mothers twice a month to discuss such issues as hygiene, attendance, and performance. The teachers are also expected to raise the mothers' awareness of the country's rapid population growth.

The satellite schools have attracted slightly more girls than boys, with girls making up 53 percent of the enrollment. The schools have a 100 percent completion rate, in contrast with regular government schools, which lose about 40 percent by grade 2 (Sedere 1995b). Preliminary reports indicate a high transfer rate (88 percent) into government schools. Comparisons of satellite and government school students in grade 3 revealed that satellite school children perform better than regular students. However, satellite students who transferred into the regular schools did worse than regular school students in all subjects tested. (The data do not present results by gender.) It is not clear what causes the low performance of transferred students.

According to several informants, the success of satellite schools is creating problems for mother school administrators, who lack the space and teachers to accommodate the new students. With a tentative plan to have 4,000 satellite schools operating by 1996, these tensions may mount.

Increasing the number of women teachers

A recent recruitment policy to have women make up 60 percent of new teachers has brought their share among teachers from 18 percent in the



Student populations are expanding rapidly

late 1980s to 22 percent today. Although it will take many years to bring the teaching force into gender parity, the preferential hiring of women is having a positive impact on both the women and the girls they teach. Female teachers provide role models for girls and are reportedly less likely than male teachers to use physical punishment, still widespread in Bangladeshi schools.

Bangladesh, like many other countries, is experiencing problems keeping female teachers in rural areas. Ministry officials are now recruiting at the community level and rehiring retired female teachers.

Curriculum changes and textbook production

In recent years Bangladesh has extensively revised its primary education curriculum, seeking to make its content "modern and scientific." In particular, the curriculum changes have made textbooks more gender-sensitive, balancing the illustrations of girls and boys and using names of both girls and boys in the stories. Topics include effects on family and social welfare,

gender roles and responsibilities, personal hygiene, nutrition, and the environment. Lessons being developed for textbooks for middle primary grades address legal rights of women and self-dependence. Educational materials used as supplements in the upper primary grades focus on the dissemination of appropriate technologies. The underlying assumption is that the main difficulties women face are their low skills in production, not their low position in society.

Although some useful knowledge about the conditions of women in Bangladesh is being introduced in the curriculum, it is contained primarily in supplementary materials.

Education authorities have produced several posters about women's role in society and the importance of education, aimed at encouraging adults to send girls to school. But these posters, reportedly distributed to many public agencies and to all schools, are not in evidence.

Other initiatives

Radio messages and television spots also are being used to encourage pri-

mary education. In one of these spots, shown during enrollment season, a local folk singer surrounded by children recounts that primary education is now compulsory. Other spots convey to parents the importance of education. For example, one spot shows an illiterate mother confusing rat poison with medicine because she cannot read.

Under the Food for Education Program, implemented in 1,000 of the country's approximately 4,500 unions (a territorial unit), students receive 15 kilograms of wheat a month, reducing the opportunity costs of sending children to school. It is said that as a result of this incentive, attendance in those schools is about 80 percent. Ministry sources believe that 1.4 million additional students are attending primary school because of this program.

Another small experimental program also designed to make school less expensive for parents is being implemented in some 700 schools. Money is distributed to the schools to provide school feeding programs, free uni-

forms, teaching aids, and outreach programs.

Thanks to these and other programs, girls' participation in primary schooling has grown steadily—from 43 percent of primary enrollment in 1986 to 46 percent in 1994. According to 1990-91 data, there are no significant differences between boys and girls in dropout, repetition, and survival rates. But considering that fewer girls enter primary school, it can be assumed that the intellectual quality or socioeconomic level of the girls enrolled is higher. There are assertions that more girls are completing their primary education, but no longitudinal statistics.

Assessing the Bangladeshi efforts

While the country is putting in place measures likely to promote higher enrollment and retention of girls in primary schooling, the efforts do not always specifically identify girls as the beneficiaries. Notable exceptions are the NGO programs, which target girls by seeking 70 percent female enroll-



Women teachers have become role models in Bangladesh

ment and by having only female teachers. Satellite and community schools aim at providing schools closer to home and with a greater financial contribution from the community, but they are not particularly designed to favor girls, although teachers must be women.

The government's policy of recruiting a new teaching force whose composition is at least 60 percent female is being implemented. But it is unclear whether the new teachers (and others in the system) are being trained to create girl-friendly teaching environments. While new textbooks are more gender balanced, the materials, preservice and in-service training of teachers, and recruitment of female teachers seem weak.

Community participation, when closely coordinated and monitored, seems to yield the expected benefits for girls' education. The satellite schools,

coordinated and monitored with reasonable frequency by ministry officials, are outperforming the regular schools on several indicators.

The most positive element in the Bangladeshi efforts to advance girls' education comes from the government's willingness to experiment with NGOs as vehicles for the delivery of alternative or parallel education. With 40 million illiterate adults and 4 million children out of school, Bangladesh needs to rely on many educational providers (PMED 1995). The public education system is already under considerable pressure, with a teacher-student ratio of 1:66. Nevertheless, a close relationship with NGOs has not yet developed, and ways to develop greater understanding of the diversity and comparative advantages of NGOs as providers of nonformal primary schooling remain to be explored.

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